



Homeland Security | CFATS Knowledge Center

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Subject: How DHS Tiers Chemical Facilities

Abstract: The term tier refers to the risk level associated with a facility covered under the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS) and is assigned to a facility by the Department.

Certain chemical facilities pose higher security risks than others due to the dynamic nature of the chemical industry, their processes, and other factors. Rather than apply a one-size-fits-all regulatory approach, DHS has established a risk-based approach that takes into account the varying levels of consequence, vulnerability, and threat that facilities present. This approach allows the facilities to establish an appropriate set of security measures commensurate with their specific risks. By establishing risk-based tiers, each facility will be able to select implementation security measures that are commensurate with the level of risk posed by that facility. The risk-based tiering structure also allows the Department to prioritize its efforts on the highest risk facilities

CFATS requires chemical facilities to provide DHS with information to determine whether they present a high-risk and therefore are required to implement security measures that meet applicable risk-based performance standards (RBPSs). Based on an assessment of the information a facility submits to the Department, including information submitted through the CSAT Top-Screen, the Department will make an initial determination on whether the facility is considered high-risk.

Facilities that are not considered high-risk are notified of that determination and are not required to comply further with CFATS (unless they are required to file new Top-Screens based on the acquisition or possession of new COI). For a facility that the Department initially determines to be high-risk, however, the Department will place the facility into one of four preliminary risk-based tiers ranging from Tier 1 (highest-risk) to Tier 4 (lower-risk). Preliminary tiering is based largely upon consequence modeling at the facility. Facilities that are issued a preliminary risk-based tier are then required to complete a CSAT Security Vulnerability Assessment (SVA). The SVA collects more in-depth information about the facility that allows DHS to assign the facility to a final risk tier. This in-depth information allows for the calculation of vulnerability, consequence and threat values (including data held by the Federal Government). The Department reviews the SVA to determine whether it continues to consider the facility to be high-risk, and if so, will issue the facility a final tiering determination. The final tier

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How DHS “Tiers” Chemical Facilities

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The Department’s tiering algorithm is classified, but the presence or quantity of a particular chemical of interest (COI) listed in Appendix A is not the sole factor in determining a facility’s tier, nor is it an indicator of a facility’s eventual or continued coverage under the rule. The Department considers various factors in making both preliminary and final tiering determinations, including potential risk to human health and national security from a successful attack on the facility.

If you have any questions about CFATS, please contact the CSAT Help Desk by phone at 866-323-2957 or use the CSAT Help Desk Web Form at http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/gc_1169501486197.shtm.

A copy of the CFATS regulation, the Appendix A Chemicals of Interest list, and various guidance documents are available at www.dhs.gov/chemicalsecurity.